

Visa Processing Fees to Change on April 13, 2012

Embassy of the United States, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, April 10, 2012 --

Effective April 13, 2012, U.S. visa processing fees will change. While the fees for most nonimmigrant visa applications and Border Crossing Cards will increase, all immigrant visa processing fees will decrease.

The U.S. Department of State is required by law to recover, as far as possible, the cost of processing visas through the collection of application fees, also called Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fees. A cost-of-service model is updated annually to determine direct and indirect costs to the U.S. government when providing all consular services, such as nonimmigrant visa processing. This update was completed in December 2011 and shows that certain categories of nonimmigrant visas cost more to process than other categories of visas. The new fees reflect the costs of each visa service.

The nonimmigrant visa processing fee increase – from \$140 to \$160 - will support the addition and expansion of overseas facilities, as well as additional staffing required to meet increased visa demand. The last increase in MRV fees was June 5, 2010.

Although most categories of nonimmigrant visa processing fees will increase, the fee for E visas (treaty-traders and treaty-investors) and K visas (for fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens) will decrease. Because of a reallocation of costs associated with immigrant visas, all categories of immigrant visa processing fees will also decrease.

Applicants will be charged the fee in effect on the day of payment. For fees that are increasing, receipts for payments made prior to the fee changes will be accepted for 90 days after the fee takes effect, or through July 12, 2012. In categories where fees are declining, no refunds will be available for those who paid prior to the effective date; however, these receipts are valid for the usual one year from the date of issuance.

The U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia approves 94% of visa applicants, one of the highest visa approval rates in the world. Waiting times for visa appointments are shrinking, and we are returning visas with passports with visas at an increasing pace, often within one week.

The Consular Sections in the Embassy and our Consulates General in Jeddah and Dhahran continue to open doors to qualified travelers. We have improved our level of service while handling a rapidly growing number of travelers. Last year, we saw a record number of people applying for visas: 109,533, a 25% increase from the year before and a 130% increase since 2008.

We are happy to see the increasing number of students seeking visas to the United States. In 2005, we issued visas to 2,166 Saudi students across the country. Last year, we issued 28,359 student visas. Students made up 26% of our applicants.

Fee information may be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website, travel.state.gov, and on the websites of the U.S. Embassy and Consulates General in Saudi Arabia at <http://riyadh.usembassy.gov>.